

Message Text

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12
ACTION NEA-10

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CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CE
SUBJ: QUARTERLY OVERVIEW: OCT-DEC 1975

REF: 75 COLOMBO 3259

1. SUMMARY: SEPT OUSTER OF TROTSKYITES FROM
GOVERNMENT AND GSL'S NEW ECONOMIC POLICIES, MAINLY
SET FORTH IN NOV BUDGET SPEECH, DID NOT PROVE
TO BE INSTANT PANACEAS FOR SRI LANKA' SAILING ECONOMY
OR RULING PARTY'S FADING POPULARITY. THEY DID,
HOWEVER, REPRESENT SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN COURSE.
OUSTED TROTSKYITES CONFINED THEIR ATTACKS ON
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GOVT TO VERBAL CRITICISM DELIVERED IN

NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS, CULMINATING IN UNSUCCESSFUL NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION WHICH UNITED ALL OPPOSITION PARTIES. OPPOSITION UNITED NATIONAL PARTY HELD ANNUAL CONVENTION OUTWARDLY CONFIDENT THAT IT COULD WIN ANY ELECTION HELD NOW DESPITE INTERNAL SPLIT. SOME TAMILS, LESS INTERESTED IN ELECTIONS, CONTINUED--NON-VIOLENT--LOW-KEY AGITATION FOR SEPARATE STATE DESPITE SOME GOVT CONCESSIONS.

2. ECONOMIC INITIATIVES IN 1976 BUDGET MESSAGE WERE WIDE-RANGING AND LAID GROUNDWORK FOR MORE TRULY MIXED ECONOMY THROUGH INCREASED INCENTIVES FOR INVESTMENT, BOTH DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN, AND FOR FOOD PRODUCTION. ECONOMY CONTINUED TO FALTER, HOWEVER, DUE TO POOR 1974-75 MONSOON AND CONTINUED INFLATION OF PRICES OF OIL AND IMPORTED RAW MATERIALS AND MANUFACTURES. NOTEWORTHY, WAS GSL'S SMOOTH TAKE-OVER OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC COMPANY-OWNED TEA, RUBBER AND COCONUT PLANTATIONS WITH PROVISION FOR MUTUALLY AGREED-UPON COMPENSATION.

3. IN FOREIGN RELATIONS, GSL CONTINUES TO EMPHASIZE AUGUST, 1976 NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT COLOMBO. DECEMBER BHUTTO VISIT UNDERLINED GSL'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INTEREST IN BALANCED RELATIONS WITHIN SUBCONTINENT AND CONTINUATION OF CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND SRI LANKA.

4. AMERICAN ECONOMIC INTEREST IN SRI LANKA, NOW VERY SMALL, HAS BEEN POTENTIALLY ENHANCED BY RECENT BUDGET INITIATIVES ESPECIALLY THOSE IN INVESTMENT AND BANKING FIELDS. TWO RECENT CONTRACTS SIGNED WITH AMERICAN OIL COMPANY SHOULD RESULT IN SIGNIFICANT US PRESENCE HERE IN FIELD OF OIL EXPLORATION. US CONTINUED TO BE ATTACKED BY LEFTIST POLITICIANS AND PRESS, PARTICULARLY ON ISSUE OF RECENT SHIP VISIT. SRILANKA CONTINUED TO BE PASSIVELY HELPFUL ON KOREAN ISSUE AT UN BUT ITS UN VOTES ON ZIONISM AND DECOLONIZATION ISSUES WERE UNHELPFUL. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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END SUMMARY.

5. DOMESTIC POLITICS: MODERATES THROUGHOUT SRI LANKA WHO HAD PRIVATELY REJOICED (AND IN A FEW CASES PUBLICLY GLOATED) AT SEPT 2 OUSTER FROM COALITION GOVT OF TROTSKYITE LANKA SAMA SAMAJA PARTY (LSSP) BEGAN LAST QUARTER OF 1975 WITH HIGH, PERHAPS UNREALISTIC, EXPECTATIONS OF NEW AND

PRAGMATIC POLICIES THAT WOULD LIFT COUNTRY FROM ECONOMIC MORASS IN WHICH IT HAS BEEN MIRED. SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY (SLFP) SAW IN NEW SITUATION POTENTIAL UPSURGE IN POPULAR SUPPORT WHICH WOULD KEEP PARTY IN POWER AT NEXT ELECTION. LSSP WAS QUESTION MARK WITH ITS PRESUMED POTENTIAL FOR CALLING OUT WORKERS AND DISRUPTING ECONOMY OR ALTERNATIVELY EMBARRASSING GOVT BY REVEALING WHATEVER ETHICAL LAPSES MAY HAVE OCCURRED IN PAST FIVE YEARS.

6. IF THIS WAS THE SITUATION IN OCT, END OF YEAR FOUND EVERYONE MORE RESTRAINED. OPTIMISM AMONG SOME IN BUSINESS AND PRIVATE SECTOR GAVE WAY TO SUBDUED HOPE AS REALIZATION DAWNED THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF BUDGET INITIATIVES (SEE BELOW) WOULD REQUIRE STRONG LEADERSHIP AND ENERGETIC MANAGEMENT, BOTH IN SHORT SUPPLY AT WORKING LEVELS OF GSL BUREAUCRACY. LSSP HAS DOMONSTRATED IT IS WILLING TO CONFINE ITS ATTACKS TO FLOOR OF PARLIAMENT WHERE ITS BITTER DIATRIBES CULMINATED IN MOTION OF NO-CONFIDENCE IN PRIME MINISTER ON ISSUE OF TIMING OF HER FAMILY'S LAND SALES 75 COLOMBO 4083. MOTION WAS DEFEATED 43-100 BUT LEFT BITTER AFTERTASTE AND PROSPECT OF MORE SUCH PERSONAL ATTACKS TO COME ON PM AND RELATIVES.

7. OPPOSITION CONSERVATIVE UNITED NATIONAL PARTY HAD PLEASURE OF SEEING ECONOMY POLICY TRENDS MOVING IN ITS DIRECTION AFTER FIVE YEARS. PARTY BELIEVES IT CAN WIN NEXT ELECTION BUT HELD YEAR-END CONVENTION WITHOUT RESOLVING INTERNAL SCHISM BETWEEN TRADITIONALLY FEUDING SENANAYAKE AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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JAYEWARDENE FACTIONS.

8. SLFP'S ENTHUSIASM TOO HAS WANED AFTER INITIAL BUDGET CAMPAIGN ON THEME OF "GETTING COUNTRY MOVING AGAIN." IN ADDITION TO SUFFERING EMBARRASSMENT OF ON-CONFIDENCE VOTE, PARTY FACED INTERNAL TRADE UNION SPLIT AS LEFTIST JANAVEGAYA GROUP BEGAN ORGANIZING PARALLEL UNIONS BITTERLY CONTESTED BY ENTRENCHED SLFP LABOR LEAF RS. PARTY ALSO BEGAN ACTIVELY RECRUITING FORMER INSURGENTS WITH ANURA BANDARANAIKE PUBLICLY ANNOUNCING FORMATION OF "COOPERATION FRONT" TO BRING THEM INTO RULING PARTY'S FOLD. COMMUNIST PARTY'S CONTINUING SUPPORT AMONG YOUTH WAS DEMONSTRATED BY CAMPUS ELECTION VICTORIES ALTHOUGH SAME ELECTIONS

SHOWED SURPRISING STRENGTH FOR PREVIOUSLY MORIBUND STUDENT WING OF UNP.

9. TAMIL SCENE WAS OUTWARDLY QUIETER THAN IN PREVIOUS QUARTER WHICH HAD BEEN MARKED BY ASSASSINATION OF JAFFNA MAYOR AND RUMORS OF SABOTAGE BUT UNDERGROUND AGITATION, PARTICULARLY AMONG YOUTH, IS STRONG AS EVER. LOW-KEY PUBLIC PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN FOR SEPARATE STATE CONTINUED AND TAMIL UNITED FRONT MP S TABLED SEPARATE STATE MOTION IN ASSEMBLY. GOVT MADE SEVERAL CONCESSIONS TO TAMILS THIS QUARTER. CHANGE IN UNIVERSITY ADMISSION PROCEDURES WILL HAVE EFFECT OF INCREASING NUMBER OF TAMIL STUDENTS. GSL ALSO PUT INTO EFFECT CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION ALLOWING USE OF TAMIL AS COURT LANGUAGE OF RECORD IN TAMIL-MAJORITY AREAS.

10. ECONOMIC POLICY CHANGES: GSL TOOK SPECIFIC STEPS AND PROPOSED FURTHER ACTIONS WHICH IN SUM CONSTITUTE SIGNIFICANT TREND IN NATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICY AWAY FROM STRESS ON INCREASED STATE OWNERSHIP OF PRODUCTION, SUBSIDIZED CONSUMPTION AND INCOME REDISTRIBUTION TOWARD INVESTMENT, PRODUCTION AND EMPLOYMENT BASED ON ECONOMIC INCENTIVES. MAJOR ACTIONS, MAINLY INCLUDED IN FINANCE MINISTER'S BUDGET SPEECH NOV 5, INCLUDED PROVISION OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INCREASED INCENTIVES FOR FOOD PRODUCTION (REMOVAL OF GOVT MARKET CONTROLS ON RICE/PADDY RESTORATION OF FERTILIZER SUBSIDY), CLARIFICATION OF ROLE OF PRIVATE SECTOR AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO POTENTIAL DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN INVESTORS TO SUBMIT SPECIFIC PROPOSALS, CANCELLATION OF LONG-THREATENED NATIONALIZATION OF FOREIGN BANKS AND INVITATION TO EXISTING AND NEW FOREIGN BANKS TO PARTICIPATE IN FINANCING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. (FOR DETAILS, SEE 75 COLOMBO 3538.) HOWEVER, GSL'S STRONG POST-BUDGET PRESSURE FORCE LOWER PRICES OF POPULAR CONSUMER GOODS CREATED ADVERSE REACTION IN PRIVATE SECTOR WHICH FEELS ITS ALREADY THIN PROFIT MARGINS MIGHT BE WIPED OUT.

1. ALTHOUGH OVERSHADOWED BY POLITICAL AND OTHER ECONOMIC POLICY DEVELOPMENTS COMPLETION IN OCT OF ALMOST TOTAL NATIONALIZATION OF ALL LOCALLY AND FOREIGN-OWNED TREE CROP ESTATES WAS ECONOMICALLY SIGNIFICANT AND, OF COURSE, POLITICALLY POPULAR. UNDER DIRECTION OF BOTH PLANTATION AND AGRICULTURE MINISTRIES, NEWLY STATE-OWNED ESTATES REMAIN UNDER DE FACTO MANAGEMENT OF OLD LINE PRIVATE SECTOR AGENCY

HOUSES. NO HARD DECISIONS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN MADE ON EVENTUAL DISPOSITION AND PERMANENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR STATE PLANTATIONS BUT GSL IS CONSCIOUS THAT TREE CROP EXPORTS WILL CONTINUE INDEFINITELY TO EARN MAJOR PORTION SRI LANKA'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE. NATIONALIZATION WAS HANDLED SMOOTHLY AND FOREIGN CORPORATIONS, LARGELY BRITISH, DIVESTED OF ASSETS APPEAR REASONABLY SATISFIED WITH PROSPECTS FOR EFFECTIVE, ALBEIT SLOW, COMPENSATION.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4032

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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12 DOMESTIC ECONOMY'S PERFORMANCE: ALTHOUGH THERE WERE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN SOME SECTORS, FOURTH QUARTER ENDED ANOTHER YEAR OF FUNDAMENTALLY POOR PERFORMANCE BY SRI LANKA ECONOMY. AFTER GOOD

1974 PADDY HARVEST, FAILURE OF LATER 1974 RAINS LED TO MUCH LOWER RICE PRODUCTION IN 1975. THIS WAS PERHAPS MAJOR CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO VERY LOW REAL GROWTH RATE OF ABOUT 3.5 PERCENT WHICH FINANCE MINISTER ANNOUNCED IN 1976 BUDGET MESSAGE.

13. ON POSITIVE SIDE, ACCORDING RECENT CENTRAL BANK FIGURES, TEA PRODUCTION AND EXPORT EARNINGS HAVE SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVED WHILE INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UTILIZATION AND EMPLOYMENT HAVE INCREASED SOMEWHAT. RUBBER AND COCONUT PRODUCTION AND EXPORT EARNINGS REMAIN RELATIVELY FLAT. CONCERNING IMPORTS, ALTHOUGH SRI LANKA MANAGED 20 PERCENT DECREASE IN PETROLEUM PURCHASES, MUCH HIGHER VOLUME OF GRAIN IMPORTS COUPLED WITH CONTINUING INFLATION OF CRUDE OIL, RAW MATERIALS AND MANUFACTURED GOODS' PRICES MORE THAN OFFSET INCREASED EXPORT EARNINGS. THUS 1975 TRADE DEFICIT IS ESTIMATED ABOUT 30 PERCENT GREATER THAN IN 1974. OVERALL 1975 BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DEFICIT IS ESTIMATED TO BE SOMEWHAT LESS THAN THAT OF 1974, LARGELY DUE TO MUCH INCREASED 1975 AID FLOWS AND SHORT-TERM BORROWING.

14. REFLECTING IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP WITH GSL, IMF GRANTED SRI LANKA OIL FACILITY OF 21 MILLION SDR'S AND HAS UNDER CONSIDERATION STANDBY FACILITY. THIS IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS WITH IMF, IS ANOTHER BRIGHT SPOT ON ECONOMIC HORIZON. ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK TOO INCREASED ITS FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF GSL, MAKING MAJOR LOAN FOR UREA FERTILIZER PLANT.

15. SRI LANKA'S FOREIGN RELATIONS: MUCH OF SRI LANKA'S FOREIGN RELATIONS NOW APPEARS TO BE CARRIED OUT WITH EYE ON COLOMBO NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT NEXT AUGUST. PM HAS ANNOUNCED A SOUTHEAST ASIA TOUR TO BURMA, THAILAND AND INDONESIA FOR JANUARY DURING WHICH SHE WILL PROBABLY PURSUE HER EFFORTS TO DEVELOP AND "ASIAN IDENTITY" AND TO SEEK GREATER COHESION AMONG ASIAN NATIONS IN NON-ALIGNED AND OTHER THIRD WORLD FORUMS. PUTTING IN THEIR OWN BID FOR INFLUENCE NEXT AUGUST, LIBYA AND CUBA BOTH OPENED EMBASSIES IN COLOMBO DURING LATE 1975. NORTH KOREA IS ATTEMPTING TO RE-OPEN ITS MISSION HERE (IS HAS HAD NO RESIDENT PERSONNEL SINCE 1971 INSURGENCY), BUT HAS RECEIVED LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT FROM GSL.

16. VISIT OF PAKISTAN'S PRIME MINISTER, ZULFIQAR ALI

BHUTTO, IN DECEMBER UNDERLINED SRI LANKA'S WARM
RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN RESULTING FROM COMMON FEAR
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OF INDIAN DOMINATION AND PAKISTAN'S NEW COMMERCIAL
ROLE AS LEADING IMPORTER OF SRI LANKA TEA.

17. SEVEN SRI LANKA NAVY MEN RETURNED FROM TRAINING
IN USSR THIS QUARTER. OSA-CLASS PATROL BOAT DONATED
BY SOVIET UNION WAS HANDED OVER RECENTLY AND SOVIET
CREW WILL REMAIN IN SRI LANKA FOR TRAINING PURPOSES
TEMPORARILY. WE HAVE NOTED CONINUED HIGH LEVEL OF GENERAL
SOVIET INTEREST HERE BUT SUCCESS INHIBITED BY
GSL SUSPICION OF SOVIET MOTIVES.

18. US-SRI LANKA RELATIONS: GSL'S EVOLVING ECONOMIC
POLICY AND OTHER NEW DEVELOPMENTS POTENTIALLY ENHANCED
AMERICAN ECONOMIC INTERESTS, STILL VERY SMALL, IN
SRI LANKA. IN FOLLOW-UP TO SEPTEMBER 1975 CONSULTANCY
CONTRACT WITH AMERICAN OIL FROM PEXAMIN, CEYLON PETROLEUM
SIGNED CONTRACT JANUARY 2 WITH SAME FIRM FOR JOINT
VENTURE ON PRODUCTION SHARING BASIS(SEE
COLOMBO 106) CPC OFFICIALS PLAN TO VISIT
US TO PURSUE FURTHER EXPLORATION EFFORTS.

19 . AS PART OF EFFORT TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE AIR
SERVICE TO SRI LANKA, AIR CEYLON OFFICIALS ARE

ACTIVELY SEEKING TO BUY AMERICAN-MADE WIDE-BODIED
JET AND HAVE DISCUSSED POSSIBILITY OF TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE DURING RECENT VISIT OF PAN AMERICAN
OFFICIALS. GSL HAS ALSO EXPRESSED INTEREST IN
RESUMPTION OF SERVICE TO SRI LANKA BY
AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL CARRIER.

20. IN RESPONSE TO FINANCE MINISTER'S RESTATEMENT
OF FOREIGN BANKING POLICY, SEVERAL AMERICAN BANKS,
ESPECIALLY FIRST NATIONAL CITY BANK, HAVE INDICATED
INTEREST IN CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS WITH GSL
OFFICIALS CONCERNING INCREASING THEIR ACTIVITY HERE,
POSSIBLY TO INCLUDE REPRESENTATION IN COLOMBO. THIS MIGHT
CREATE POLITICAL PROBLEMS FOR THE GSL.

21. GSL HAS FOLLOWED CLOSELY PROGRESS OF GENERALIZED
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SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES; PUBLICATION THIS QUARTER OF
FINAL LIST OF ELIGIBLE ITEMS STIREED INTEREST HERE
AND COINCIDED NICELY WITH NEW LOCAL ATTITUDE OF
GUARDED OPTIMISM ON ECONOMY. DECEMBER ARRIVAL OF
FERTILIZER UNDER EIGHT MILLION DOLLAR AID DEVELOPMENT
LOAN MARKED FIRST US NON-PL-480 ASSISTANCE SINCE 1969.

22. ON POLITICAL SIDE US WAS TARGET OF SEVERAL
ATTACKS BY LSSP BUT THEY WERE GIVEN PROMINENCE PRIMARILY
IN PARTY PRESS. MASS CIRCULATION NEWSPAPERS,
HOWEVER, DID REPORT LSSP CRITICISM OF NOVEMBER VISIT
BY THREE US NAVAL VESSELS, THE FIRST SUCH ATTACKS
IN RECENT YEARS. LSSP CONTENTION THAT VISIT OF
WARSHIPS WAS INCOMPATIBLE WITH CONCEPT OF INDIAN
OCEAN PEACE ZONE WAS REFUTED BY PRIME MINISTER IN
NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY (COLOMBO 75 3512)

23. SRI LANKA'S EVEN-HANDEDNESS WAS LESS APPARENT
IN UNGA THIS QUARTER. WHILE USG WAS SATISFIED
WITH GSL'S ABSTENTION ON BOTH KOREAN RESOLUTIONS,
VOTES ON ZIONISM AND DECOLONIZATION ISSUES WERE
UNFORTUNATE FROM US POINT OF VIEW. AS COLOMBO
NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT DRAWS NEARER, SRI LANKA SHOWS
UNWILLINGNESS TO BREAK WITH STANDARD THIRD WORLD
LINE.
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